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ABSTRACT

The United States Congress established the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) and the network of State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICCs) in the Education Amendments of 1976. NOICC and SOICCs were mandated to foster coordination and communication among producers and users of occupational information for career decision making, and program planning. Subsequent federal legislation expanded the Committees' membership and strengthened the mission. In developing systems to accomplish the mandates, the NOICC/SOICCs network has initiated and implemented Occupational Information Systems (OIS) used for planning education and training programs in 38 states and 7 territories. In addition, there are currently in operation 46 state-wide Career Information Delivery Systems (CIDS) serving approximately 7 million users each year at more than 18,000 sites. Other projects initiated or supported by NOICC include Improve Career Decision Making projects; military career information projects; audiovisual career information enhancement products; and the National Guidelines for Career Development project. (ABL)

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COORDINATING CAREER COUNSELING AND OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

It is an honor for me to be here with you in Ottawa at your National Consultation on Vocational Counseling and to represent the United States National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, which is known as NOICC. I am pleased to be meeting with you to share information about the work of NOICC in the U. S. and to learn from you what is happening in Canada in the area of career counseling.

However, this is not my first meeting with government officials or counseling professionals in Canada. Over the past year, I have met with Lionel Dixon on several occasions to discuss NOICC activities in the areas of occupational and career information. In fact, my meeting with Mr. Dixon in July last year resulted in the invitation to speak at this meeting and also an invitation to visit your excellent Career Centre at the University of Toronto, which I plan to do during the coming spring or summer.

In addition, I addressed the CHOICES National Advisory Meeting here last January. I understand that CHOICES is used extensively in all your provinces in Canada. Since CHOICES is a state adopted career information delivery system in several states

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Presented by Juliette Noone Lester, Executive Director of the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, for delivery at the Fourteenth National Consultation on Vocational Counselling on January 26, 1988, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

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states and territories in the U. S., we share a common interest in the use of this type of computerized occupational and career information for the purposes of career exploration and decision making.

Today, I will discuss 3 areas with you: 1) the background and structure of the NOICC and its network of State Committees in the United States; 2) our major accomplishments to date, and, particularly, the role that our current projects in occupational and career information delivery can play in career counseling efforts; and 3) I will share with you information about the current NOICC effort in establishing national career development guidelines.

HISTORY

I would like to begin by giving you some background information about NOICC because some of you may be hearing about it for the first time today. NOICC is a relatively young agency which is now in its 11th year of operation. The U. S. Congress first established NOICC and the network of State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees, called SOICCs, in the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976.

The NOICC and the SOICCs were mandated to promote the development and use of occupational information for the purposes of: 1) program planning and 2) career decision making. Subsequent Federal legislation -- including the Job Training Partnership Act and the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act -- expanded the Committees' membership and strengthened their mission. Unlike most other government programs, NOICC and SOICCs are interagency committees, with representatives from designated Federal and State

agencies which are producers and/or users of occupational information.

I should stress that the National and State Committees were not intended to be and are not data collection agencies. Rather, NOICC and SOICCs provide a forum for their member agencies to focus on a common goal -- promoting the development, delivery and use of occupational information.

NOICC: The NOICC now includes in its Committee membership representatives from nine Federal agencies in five cabinet departments. These are:

1. Department of Education

Assistant Secretary, Vocational and Adult Education
Director, Bilingual and Minority Language Affairs
Administrator, Center for Statistics
Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration

2. Department of Labor

Commissioner, Bureau of Labor Statistics
Assistant Secretary, Employment and Training Administration

3. Department or Commerce

Assistant Secretary, Economic Development Administration

4. Department of Agriculture

Under Secretary, Small Community and Rural Affairs

5. Department of Defense

Under Secretary, Small Community and Rural Affairs

SOICCs: Similarly, the SOICCs in the 50 states and 7 territories must include representatives from five state agencies.

There include:

1. The board which administers vocational education;
2. The economic development agency;
3. The employment security agency;
4. The job training coordinating council; and
5. The agency administering vocational rehabilitation services

Many SOICCs also invite other interested and appropriate agencies to become members of their Committees, such as higher education, the office of planning and budget, and the Alliance of Business. The SOICCs foster coordination, communication, and cooperation among their respective member agencies and they work together to accomplish their mandated mission within the larger Federal and State network.

REASON FOR THE FEDERAL LEGISLATION: When the Congress established NOICC in 1976, very little had been done in the United States to examine the relationship between the collection of occupational information and its relevance to education and training program planning, career exploration and decision making, or economic development. There was no existing framework for defining what information was needed for these activities, and especially the types and levels of information needed by individuals making decisions about careers. Further, there was no system for organizing the information to meet their needs.

This is what NOICC and SOICCs have been doing for the past 11 years. Our work has focused on promoting the development, delivery and use of occupational information, and this has been

accomplished cooperatively within our established network of Federal and State interagency committees.

FUNDING: NOICC receives its funding appropriations through the Departments of Labor and Education at the Federal level, and allocates about 80 percent of those funds to the SOICCs through Basic Assistance Grants to cover the cost of operating the Committees in the States and territories. Special Purpose Grants are also made by NOICC to the SOICCs to promote the development and operation of programs and projects to help in fulfilling our mandate. One of these Special Purpose Grant programs supports Career Information Delivery Systems, called CIDS, which I will discuss later.

NOICC/SOICC NETWORK ACTIVITIES

In developing workable systems to accomplish our mandates, the National and State Committees play different roles. NOICC establishes the framework and national guidelines for systems and provides financial support and technical assistance to help SOICCs. The SOICCs develop and organize information collected by State agencies, and they implement, support, and maintain systems to deliver information to serve the two primary needs related to our mandate: 1) the need for labor market information by planners and administrators of vocational education and job training programs; and 2) the need for occupational and educational information to support career exploration and decision making.

PROGRAM PLANNING: I will only briefly mention the program planning activity, since the focus of this Consultation is vocational counseling. In the States and territories, employment

security agencies and educational agencies produce labor market and educational information, such as projections of occupational demand, job openings, and educational and training program completers. In 1988, with technical assistance and funding from NOICC, 38 States and territories have implemented and are operating microcomputer-based systems for the delivery of such information to program planners and 7 are using an interactive mainframe computer OIS.

The computer-based Occupational Information System, called the OIS, is an important source of occupational and educational information for State planners to use as they engage in program planning to support economic development and human resource development.

Another important use of the OIS in a State or territory is as a source of current and accurate, State-specific, occupational information needed for annual updates of computer-based Career Information Delivery Systems.

CAREER DECISION MAKING: Over the past 11 years, NOICC has initiated and/or supported several projects to support career counseling activities. Some of these are: 1) Career Information Delivery Systems (CIDS); 2) Improve Career Decision Making (ICDM) projects; 3) military career information projects; 4) audiovisual career information enhancement products; and 5) our newest and most ambitious project, the National Guidelines for Career Development.

1. CIDS: NOICC promotes the implementation of Statewide Career Information Delivery Systems. We provide technical

assistance and financial support for this purpose. Of the 46 Statewide CIDS in operation in 1988, 26 were originally implemented with funding from NOICC. In addition, NOICC has provided technical and financial support to nearly all the CIDS for special enhancements to their systems, such as the incorporation of information about military occupations and training opportunities.

NOICC encourages States to adopt existing computer-based systems, and most have done so. Your Canadian developed system, CHOICES, is one of the available software systems used in several States and territories. Of course, they add U. S. and State-specific occupational and educational information required to serve the needs of the clients who use the systems. Other commercial computer-based systems in use are Careers, CIS, and GIS.

The CIDS program has been very successful. It is estimated that collectively computer-based CIDS in the United States serve 7 million users per year at more than 18,000 individual sites.

2. ICDM: In 1981, NOICC and several of its member agencies began the Improve Career Decision Making (ICDM) program as a series of inservice workshops to train counselors on the sources and use of occupational information in career counseling activities. These workshops are conducted in the States under the auspices of the SOICCs. By the end of May 1988, this program will have provided training to more than 17,000 counselors in 54 States and territories.

A related NOICC effort, the ICDM preservice project, has resulted in the development of a new publication, Using Labor

Market Information in Career Exploration and Decision Making: A Resource Guide, which is used as a primary or supplementary text in college and university counselor education courses. This Resource Guide is also being used in NOICC supported training sessions conducted by the American Association for Counseling and Development for counselor educators across the U. S.

3. MILITARY CAREER INFORMATION: The Department of Defense has provided NOICC with funding for several major projects of mutual interest to that Department and to the NOICC/SOICC network. One successful program has resulted in the development and dissemination of information about military careers and how they relate to civilian counterparts. This information is available in both printed form and computer tape. The computerized information has been provided to most Statewide CIDS under a NOICC grant program, with Department of Defense funds.

4. AUDIOVISUAL CAREER INFORMATION: NOICC has worked with a consortium of SOICCs to develop two videotape career products designed to enhance career counseling programs. The first of these is "Kaleidoscope of Careers," which contains audiovisual presentations of 200 occupations in 30 second vignettes for use in junior and senior high schools. It is most effective when used in conjunction with a computer-based CIDS. The second is "Picking Your Path," a career exploration videotape for elementary school children.

5. NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES PROJECT: I wish to spend most of my remaining time discussing the "National Career Development Guidelines" project, because it has major implications

for the future direction of career counseling in the United States, and it is closely related to the overall theme of this Consultation. I plan to leave time toward the end of this session to answer your questions about the Guidelines project and other NOICC activities.

NOICC is currently funding the development of the National Career Development Guidelines Project that will assist States and local institutions to develop standards for comprehensive career counseling programs, kindergarten through adult. The Guidelines will contain comprehensive lists of client outcomes, the qualifications and competencies needed by counselors to deliver the program, and institutional capabilities essential for providing quality programs for each educational level. The target audience for the publications includes teachers, career counselors and educational decision makers.

This is important in the U. S. because the Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 redefined guidance as an "educational program" that serves all youth and adults, rather than as an "ancillary service." Like academic and vocational programs, such as math and drafting, vocational guidance programs must now have established standards and expected outcomes for individuals being served.

Professional associations in the U. S. have been working towards guidelines for quality career counseling programs since the late 1970's. However, because counseling has been perceived as an "ancillary service," the establishment and acceptance of guidelines and standards have been slow in emerging.

NOICC responded to the need for guidelines and initiated the first nationwide project to foster excellence in career development and counseling through the establishment of uniform guidelines which can be used for establishing State and local program standards. This was appropriate, since the NOICC/SOICC network is involved in the development and use of occupational information, and this type of information is a central component of career counseling.

To initiate the project, NOICC awarded a two-phase grant on a competitive basis to the North Dakota SOICC in 1986 to develop the guidelines, implementation and training materials. The project staff is assisted by three national committees comprised of representatives from professional counseling associations, Federal and State agencies, and local counseling personnel. More than 150 individuals are serving in an advisory, review, and validation capacity during the development of the Guidelines.

The first phase of the Guidelines project, which was concluded in the fall of 1987, focused on the development of the guidelines themselves. Five modules address each of the educational levels -- 1) elementary, 2) middle school/junior high school, 3) senior high school, 4) postsecondary, and 5) adult. Each module includes 5 sections, which are:

1. Specific student and client outcomes for a comprehensive career development and counseling program at the identified educational level.
2. Counselor competencies needed to coordinate and deliver the program.

3. Institutional capabilities essential for providing a quality program.

4. Evaluation and accountability guidelines.

5. Annotated bibliographic entries that address standards and evaluations.

The second phase of the project, which began in June 1987, will produce implementation and training materials which will assist State and local institutions to use and evaluate comprehensive career counseling programs. The implementation materials will describe in detail the necessary processes and strategies for implementing the guidelines.

Some topics that will be addressed in the implementation materials are:

-State leadership in career guidance;

-Securing institutional commitment to career development and program change;

-Identifying the implementation team;

-Recommended staff training;

-The role of a local advisory committee;

-Comparing current programs with the guidelines;

-Establishing timelines;

-Obtaining administrative approval; and

-Evaluating the program.

The implementation materials will be tailored for each of the five educational levels.

The publication date for products of this project is the fall of 1988. Five documents, one for each of the five educational

levels, are scheduled to be released at that time.

To test the use of the guidelines and implementation materials, four demonstration models were funded by NOICC in October, 1987. The model sites are now in the process of using the guidelines and implementation materials which have been developed thus far.

NOICC intends to award the demonstration model grants for a second year, dependent on the availability of funds. The grants were awarded on a competitive basis to SOICCs, with most of the implementation funds flowing to the local demonstration sites.

The guidelines and implementation materials for the five levels are being tested by North Dakota (elementary); Pennsylvania (middle school and high school); Mississippi (middle school, high school and postsecondary/adult); and California (postsecondary and adult). This will result in validation and revision of the documents prior to final publication.

Process and product evaluation are major objectives of the demonstration models. The experiences of the funded States and the local sites will be included with the final publication of the guidelines and implementation materials as case studies to provide information to subsequent users of the guidelines.

During the first year, the demonstration models will primarily be involved in start-up activities. These include:

-Identifying and establishing a State leadership cadre and necessary support activities;

-Comparing existing guidance services to comprehensive career development and career counseling program guidelines;

-Training key local site personnel (counselors and administrators);

-Establishing local advisory committees which encourage parent and employer input into the career development program;

-Reviewing existing programs for coverage of student outcomes; and

-Evaluating the implementation process.

During the second year of funding for the demonstration models, they will focus on:

-Expanding on the State leadership capability and identifying needed State legislation and future funding support;

-Providing training to teachers and other support staff at the local level;

-Revising the curriculum to cover student outcomes;

-Providing additional inservice training for counselors to ensure qualifications and competencies outlined in the Guidelines; and

-Evaluating the outcomes of the career development process.

Building on the experiences with the demonstration models, NOICC intends to disseminate widely the guidelines, implementation and training materials. If funding becomes available, NOICC plans to promote the use of the guidelines nationwide, at both State and local levels, to implement comprehensive career counseling programs which have established standards and expected outcomes for individuals involved in the program. This will add a much needed component to the important field of career counseling.

CONCLUSION

I have introduced you to the NOICC and SOICCs and discussed our mission and major programs. As you leave, there is set of 5 fact sheets for you to pick up; fact sheets about: 1) NOICC; 2) the CIDS program; 3) the National Career Development Guidelines project; and 4-5) the two ICDM projects.

As you can see, we are very involved in and interested in working to support career counseling. We are well aware of the fact that excellence in career counseling programs is now more important than ever, both in the United States and Canada, as counselors face the challenge of guiding both youth and adults in their preparation for and adjustment to the work force of the future. The NOICC and SOICCs are happy to be a part of this important effort.

If you would like to discuss an idea with me, or would like me to send you information about the NOICC, I will be delighted to respond.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your kind attention and your interest in the NOICC/SOICC network in the United States.